

TESTIMONY OF DANIEL J. RIEBER, WEATHERIZATION DIRECTOR,
NORTHERN MANHATTAN IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION (NMIC), BEFORE THE
HOUSE ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
IN SUPPORT OF FY 2018 DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY FUNDING
May 3, 2017

Good morning, my name is Daniel Rieber and I'm the Weatherization Director at Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation in New York City. I appear today before this committee to submit testimony in support of the Department of Energy's (DOE) Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). I respectfully request that the Weatherization Assistance Program be kept whole and funded nationally at \$230 million dollars in FY 2018.

At NMIC we integrate numerous crisis intervention services under one roof. With their crises resolved, our clients move seamlessly to capacity building services through our holistic programs designed to support individuals and families as they develop the tools to transition from crisis to self-sufficiency. Our weatherization program is a critical piece of our mission to serve as a catalyst for positive change in the lives of the people in our community, on their paths to secure and prosperous futures.

The WAP is the largest energy efficiency retrofit program in the nation. The local Community Action Agencies and Community Based Organizations that implement the program are skilled, highly trained and held to higher standards than are often required in the commercial marketplace for equivalent work. For 40 years the WAP has lead the charge for energy efficiency, and used building science, to properly evaluate, diagnose and retrofit houses and buildings so they may become more energy efficient and safe. The WAP workforce sustains almost 9,000 jobs nationwide. Additionally, thousands of jobs are sustained through related industries and the hiring of small business contractors.

NMIC utilizes subcontractors throughout the program year to provide windows, boilers, insulation and ventilation upgrades. This workforce can consist of up to 100 workers from 8 different small business contractors.

Over the past several years we have seen the availability of affordable apartments become very scarce in Manhattan. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, in the State of New York there are just 35 affordable units available for every 100 low-income renters. As low-income tenants struggle to live in our great city, the Weatherization program is more important, today, in helping to preserve affordable housing for low-income families, especially children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. Most of the buildings we served in the last grant period were extremely inefficient and in desperate need of energy conservation measures, causing residents to pay significantly more than necessary towards energy costs. Additionally, the need for these services is staggering- our organization alone has 800 units in over 20 buildings on our waiting list. NMIC works with building owners who are committed to preserving affordable housing while still running a profitable business. Many properties were neglected over time and are in great need of assistance (for such things as boilers, pipe and roof insulation, roof repairs and windows). WAP helps keep low-income people in affordable, safe, energy efficient and, healthy homes.

Furthermore, Weatherization dollars are key to helping low-income tenant owned buildings survive. These Housing Development Fund Corporations, or HDFC's, as they are known, typically have poor cash flow and a high-energy burden. By assisting these buildings the WAP helps preserve the essence of affordable housing in low-income neighborhoods and at the same time improves the quality of life in our various communities.

The DOE Weatherization Assistance program is critical because it provides the critical base with which to leverage and combine other funding. We utilize a mix of program, owner, utility and State Energy Office (NYSERDA) dollars to weatherize buildings, making them sustainable, safe places to live.

One thing is certain, should the federal funds for WAP be significantly reduced or zeroed out, the impact would be devastating to our community. Building owners will seek out repairs and pass the cost onto their tenants. This upward pressure on rent will force people out of their homes, thus, creating a viscous cycle of displacement and uprooting of families and the elderly. The stress of losing your home through no fault of your own is the kind no one should have to endure. Furthermore, the non-profits and supportive housing agencies that rely on WAP for their clients will most likely defer maintenance until they are able to make repairs, endangering the health and safety of residents.

I would like to highlight some success stories in order to illustrate how the WAP operates in our community:

510 W 188 St. NY, NY 10040

Background:

- 6 floors
- 35 Apts.
- 36,750 Heated SqFt

Workscope:

1. New, smaller, more efficient steam boiler
2. New apartment windows
3. Refrigerator replacement
4. Low-flow showerheads
5. Pipe insulation
6. Common area and apartment lighting upgrade
7. Roof insulation

Savings:

- 42% Energy Reduction
- \$21,695 First Year Savings

179 Henry Street, NY, NY 10002

Background:

- 12 floors
- 50 Apts.
- 60,400 Heated SqFt
- HUD regulated senior housing

Workscope:

1. Conversion from steam to hydronic hot water system
2. Conversion from #6 oil to natural gas
3. Common area lighting upgrade
4. Apartment lighting upgrade

Savings:

- 47% Total Energy Reduction
- \$83,000 First Year Savings

In both cases the low-income residents were the direct beneficiaries of an affordable, safer, more comfortable home with no fear of a rent increase.

Founded in 1979 by a staff of two with the goal of assisting immigrants in northern Manhattan who were at risk of being evicted, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC) has grown to be one of New York City's most trusted, innovative and effective poverty-fighting organizations. Our programs include Legal Services, Social Services, Education and Career Services, Weatherization, and Community Organizing. The loss of the weatherization program would impact our ability to achieve our mission, as we would no longer be able to provide the comprehensive services that make a difference in the lives of the most vulnerable in our community.

In closing, I urge the Subcommittee to fund the WAP at not less than \$230 million for FY 2018, the funding level necessary to sustain a national program. This is a program that has proved its worth and effectiveness for over forty years. The WAP plays a critical role in providing and preserving affordable housing in our community, and helps hard working families across the entire country.

Thank you.